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Practical Guide for Artists: Professionalize Your International Presence Without Falling into Simulations

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Introduction

Internationalizing one's work should not be a leap into the void or an act of faith. The artistic field —in Switzerland, Europe, and anywhere in the world— operates through clear structures: institutions, archiving, curatorship, networks, and legitimacy. When an "exhibition" does not meet these elements, it stops being an opportunity and becomes a risk: economic, symbolic, and professional.

This guide offers concrete criteria to evaluate invitations, detect warning signs, and make informed decisions.

1. Verify the organizer's trajectory

- Look up their name on Google, LinkedIn, Instagram, and in the press.
- Check whether they have documented previous exhibitions.
- Confirm whether they have worked with real institutions.
- Assess the quality of their website, publications, and professional network.

If you cannot trace their work, there is no work.

2. Evaluate the exhibition space

Not all spaces carry the same weight.A professional exhibition takes place in: museums, galleries with stable programming, independent spaces with trajectory, foundations, residencies, universities, or cultural centers.

If the space is improvised, rented for a few days, or lacks continuous programming, it's a red flag.

3. Demand prior documentation

A serious exhibition always includes:

a curatorial dossier, official website, catalog or publication, professional photographic documentation, press release or statement, and a record of past activities.

If there is no prior archive, there will be no archive afterward.

4. Analyze the curatorship

Curatorship is not a pretty text: it is a conceptual framework.

It must: contextualize the works, articulate relationships, propose a reading, and generate discourse.

An exhibition without curatorship is just a set of objects hanging on a wall.

5. Ask about the audience

An international exhibition should bring together:

local artists, curators, critics, students, collectors, cultural managers, and the press.

6. Review the communication

The quality of the communication reveals the quality of the project.

Look at:

graphic design, mailing list, the venue's social media, consistency in outreach, clarity of the message.

If everything runs only through a personal Instagram account, it's amateur.

7. Request a contract

It must include:

dates, responsibilities, transport, insurance, installation and deinstallation, documentation, and artwork return.

Without a contract, there is no commitment.

8. Be wary of payments without real value

Paying for:

participation, certificates, "visibility," "international opportunity," rental of space…

without guarantees of archive, audience, or institutional backing is pay-to-play.

And pay-to-play does not build a career.

9. Demand a final archive

A professional exhibition leaves a verifiable trace:

a digital or printed catalog, professional photographic documentation, a signed curatorial text, and a permanent web link.

If no record remains, it does not exist in art history.

10. Trust your professional intuition

If something feels off — lack of clarity, exaggerated promises, suspicious urgency, empty discourse —

stop. Internationalization is not built through anxiety, but through structure.

Quick checklist (for two-minute decisions)

Is there a real institution behind it?

Is there curatorship?

Is there prior documentation?

Will there be a final archive?

Is there a contract?

Is there a professional audience?

Is there a network?

Is there serious outreach?

Does the organizer have a verifiable trajectory?

Does the cost–benefit make sense?

If more than two points fail, reconsider.

Conclusion

An exhibition is not an event:

it is an act of legitimization, a node within a network, a record that remains.

Art deserves rigor. Artists deserve respect.

And real opportunities do not need disguises.